

GENOGRAMS

A *Genogram* is a type of family tree, a diagram of a family over several generations. More importantly, it is a representation of those family relationships. It is designed to help you understand your family and most importantly **you** better. To an extent, the genogram is a road map of your family. It will show you where you came from and where you are going.

The genogram diagrams emotional links as well as genealogical lines. You may learn that you are more connected to your family than you thought. Families tend to repeat themselves. What happens in one generation can often repeat itself in the next. The Genogram can highlight both current and historical family patterns. The Genogram gives insight into how “normal” or “dysfunctional” your family is. Doing a genogram can help break through denial and point out family troubles.

Think of your family as a tree. Your family tree has roots (solid or shallow), branches (strong or weak), and leaves (brilliant or dull). While it is important to see the beauty of your tree, it is equally important to be aware of its blemishes.

When to do a Genogram

There is no perfect time to construct a genogram. You can do it when you are calm, but it is likely you won't be stacking it with unresolved emotional issues. Although a crisis is seldom the best time to dig into matters that might make your crisis even bigger, doing a genogram during this period often relieves anxiety and offers information that can help you resolve conflict.

What you need

Doing a genogram is simpler than most people think. You need a pencil and something to draw the genogram on. It is best to have a large piece of paper, as you will be surprised how many people will end up taking space on your genogram. If they are available, it is helpful to have items such as a family bible, photographs, and diaries, journals or scrapbooks.

Your relatives are an excellent, if not 100% accurate, source of family information. There is probably one relative who knows the most about your family background. Most families have an UNOFFICIAL keeper of the records. Also, keep in mind that the person with the most information to offer may not be the one you would automatically expect.

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